



Wood River Valley

Community Campus
1050 Fox Acres Road
P.O. Box 95
Hailey, Idaho 83333
(208) 481-0686
info@namiwrv.org
www.namiwrv.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Daniel Hansen

President

Page Klune

Vice-President

Kathleen Hansen

Secretary

Colleen Kassner

Treasurer

Jason Barbee

Director

Chris Koch, Mayor

Director

Neil Morrow

Director

Alyson Witmer

Director

Ms. Marlene Dortch

Secretary

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20554

As a concerned citizen that cares deeply about the issue of suicide prevention, I urge the FCC to support the designation or repurposing of an N11 dialing code for the purposes of a national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system. An easy-to-remember 3-digit phone number for a national suicide prevention and mental health hotline would increase public access to life saving crisis resources.

The Overall Recommendation of the North American Numbering Council's (NANC's) Report to the FCC, to expand the 211 code to include crisis and suicide prevention calling services, would betray the intent of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act and squander a historic opportunity to improve our country's suicide and mental health crisis systems.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Julie Carney, LCSW

Blaine County Schools

Steve England

Lieutenant, Hailey PD

Tony Evans

Journalist

Jodie Fuller

Probation Officer

Sally & Tom Hanson

President Emeritus

Nancy Kennette

Founding Member

Joyce Mills

Family Support

Roger Olson

Founding Member

Andrew Schiers

Deputy, Ketchum PD

Jan Sommer, PhD

Private Practice

Margarite Gail Wray

Former Board Chair

The mental health and the public safety of Americans deserves a sole-purpose hotline number for people in crisis. Expanding the 211 code, which currently is designated for information and referral services (like utility assistance and employment opportunities), to include the responsibilities of mental health and suicide crisis response services diminishes the issues that communities across the country are facing. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-34, the 4th leading cause of death for ages 35-54, and the 10th leading cause of death overall in the United States. Every year over 10 million people seriously consider suicide, over 1 million attempt suicide, and in 2017 we lost over 47,000 Americans to suicide.

The scope of our mental health and suicide crises demands a dedicated dialing code without a dual-purpose. Individuals in suicidal crisis are in life-and-death emergencies, emergencies which require rapid, appropriate responses. Designating 211 to handle these types of emergencies, in conjunction with their non-emergency duties, would present a life-threatening disservice to callers in crisis. NANC's Report listed the alarming disadvantages of expanding the 211 code – that a caller in crisis may have less timely access to experienced assistance, that call centers would be unprepared to handle a crisis call, inclusion of an Interactive Voice Response System (IVR) to assess the urgency of incoming calls leading to increased call wait times – that the Commission should not take lightly.

TEAM LEADERS

Christina Rose Cernansky

Executive Director

Amber Rose Leyba-Castle

Teen Intern

The historic opportunity before the Commission to improve America's crisis response network should not be wasted by expanding a current N11 code or by designating a new non-N11 number – which the NANC Report stated would not be deployed ubiquitously across the country.

I urge the FCC to designate a currently undesignated, or repurpose a currently designated, N11 code for the sole-purpose of a national suicide prevention and mental health hotline. Establishing a ubiquitous, recognizable national number (similar to 411 or 911) for mental health and suicide prevention would be a transformative step for our nation's public health by making crisis resources more accessible, by addressing the deeply entrenched stigma associated with mental health conditions, and by relieving burden on other emergency or health systems. Whether an undesignated N11 number (611) or a designated, low-use N11 number (511), I urge you to assign an N11 dialing code as a dedicated, sole-purpose number to respond to our mental health and suicide public health crises.

I thank the FCC for allowing concerned citizens, mental health professionals, and crisis service representatives to comment on this critical issue. We will not get another opportunity to so dramatically improve the way our country responds to and serves people in emotional and suicidal crisis. I urge you to support the designation or repurposing of a sole-purpose N11 dialing code to connect the millions of Americans living with mental health conditions and suicidal thoughts with the services they need.

In solidarity,

Christina Cernansky
executive director
NAMI-Wood River Valley